NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

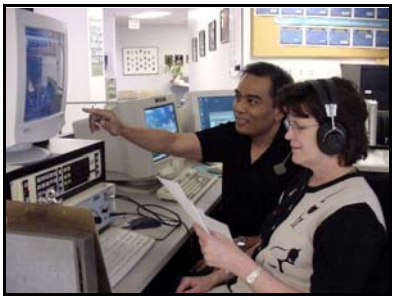
Western Region Notes

MAY 6, 2004

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Jean Okumura Bids Farewell to Western Region: WRH staff members said good-bye to Jean Okumura, former Western Region AMD Chief, on April 22 with a Hawaiian-themed farewell. Jean is moving to Honolulu, Hawaii, where she will take the job as Pacific Region AMD Chief.

Congratulations, Jean, and good luck!



WFO San Diego HMT Noel Isla assists Western Region Director Vickie Nadolski as she pre-records a message announcing the dedication of the NWR transmitter on Mount Soledad. The announcement aired during the dedication ceremony.

Dedicating A New NOAA Weather Radio In San Diego: Southern California residents, boaters, and visitors now have access to marine weather information at anytime, thanks to a new NOAA Weather Radio transmitter installed on Mt. Soledad, near La Jolla, California. The new transmitter is a cooperative effort between NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) and Flagship Properties, with site facilities provided by the U.S. Navy.

The Mount Soledad transmitter significantly increases the NWS's ability to reach the coastal land areas as well as the coastal waters of San Diego County directly with marine weather warnings and forecasts. The new marine weather radio transmitter was dedicated at an April 30 ceremony, held at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in San Diego. The transmitter is made possible by a generous donation from John O'Brien, President of Flagship Properties.

2004 NOAA Environmental Hero Award Presentations: NWS Western Region nominated four of the 31 national winners this year for the 2004 NOAA Environmental Hero Awards. Established in 1995 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, the NOAA Environmental Hero Award is presented to individuals and organizations who volunteer their time to help NOAA accomplish its mission of describing, predicting and protecting the nation's environment.

(L to R) Spokane WCM Ken Holmes, Ron Valley, and MIC John Livingston display Mr. Valley's NOAA Environmental Hero award.

Ron Valley, a recently retired engineer from KSPS Television Channel 7 television in Spokane, was nominated by NWS Spokane MIC John Livingston. "Ron Valley has worked with Ken Holmes, our Warning Coordination Meteorologist, for more than 20 years to organize and develop emergency communications and the All-Hazards Emergency Alert System (EAS) for the Inland Northwest. This program is a success because of their efforts," said Livingston

Seattle MIC Chris Hill congratulates Clay Freinwald for his award. WCM Ted Buehner holds one of the Environmental Hero plaques presented during a recent ceremony.

WFO Seattle nominated Clay Freinwald, a Senior Engineer with EnterCom Seattle and chairman of the Washington State Emergency Alert System committee. Freinwald led the effort to create a true "all-hazards" NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) in Washington state. The system, located at NWS Seattle, has been in successful operation since April 2001. Through March 2004, the system has relayed nine EAS messages: six Amber Alerts, two 911 outages, and one Evacuation Immediate (for a gas leak). As a result of Clay Freinwald's efforts, Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages from national, state, county, and local authorities reach residents automatically, and within seconds are on NOAA Weather Radio. "More than 94 percent of the state's residents have access to the NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts," MIC Chris Hill said. Freinwald was presented with his award during a ceremony held at the EnterCom Seattle newsroom on April 23.

AROUND THE REGION

Jet Streamers Team (l to r): Matt Fugazzi, Charles Ross, Paul Bos, Tracy Cox, and Stan Savoy

NWS Group Enters Lilac Bloomsday Run: On May 2, five WFO Spokane employees participated in the Corporate Cup division of the 28th annual Lilac Bloomsday Run in Spokane, Washington. This was the second year that the "Jet Streamers" participated together as a team. Team members included Service Hydrologist Charles Ross, Lead Forecaster Matt Fugazzi, Forecasters Paul Bos and Tracy Cox, and Hydro Met Tech Stan Savoy. These five joined almost 40,000 other runners in this annual event billed as the largest timed road race in the world. Corporate Cup teams are made up of five representatives from any company or organization, and they compete against each other for bragging rights as the "fastest corporation in town". Leading up to the race, the team was interviewed on local television as their unique team name drew interest.

WFO Reno Celebrates Cinco de Mayo: Staff at WFO Reno celebrated Cinco de Mayo with a mexican potluck and a real pinata. Mark Brown, HMT, was the one to break the pinata, releasing candy and goodies for all. The staff also took this opportunity to say goodbye to Patsy Buckley, ASA, who will be transferring to a position with the NFS.

San Diego MIC Jim Purpura tells his daughter what happened the night before she was born.

Five Years Ago, Meteorologist's Daughter Born Amidst Tornado Debris: Jim Purpura, MIC at WFO San Diego, recently drew out a yellowing newspaper article to show his five-year-old daughter, Suzanna Rose, what happened the night before she was born.

The May 3-4, 1999 tornado outbreak that struck Oklahoma and southern Kansas was one of the largest in the region with 71 tornadoes and $1.24 billion in damage. A total of 46 people were killed, although researchers have estimated that without the excellent forecasts, watches, and warnings from the NWS, hundreds could have died. The outbreak included a tornado that produced F5 damage in parts of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, damaging and destroying hundreds of homes and businesses.

"It is not unusual for tornadoes to occur in central Oklahoma in May," Purpura, told his daughter, Suzanna Rose. "When you were born, my job was different because I was called the Warning Coordination Meteorologist at the Weather Forecast Office in Norman."

Purpura continued telling the story. "Once we found out when you were expected to be born, I joked with all at work in Norman to plan for a massive severe weather outbreak on May 4 because I would be a dad for the second time, and it was already going to be an exciting day for me. I didn't know then how accurate my forecast would be or how I would face so many mixed emotions that day."

Purpura explained to his daughter, "The doctors told your mom and me to come to the hospital the afternoon of May 3 to sign forms because you would be born the next day. I signed out on family leave at the office and was excited because I was about to become a dad for the second time."

On the early afternoon of May 3, 1999, Purpura and his wife, Terry, went to the hospital as scheduled to be pre-admitted and complete the necessary paperwork for the birth. On the way home, Purpura was paged with the information that the Storm Prediction Center had upgraded central Oklahoma to a moderate risk of severe thunderstorms, and he was paged again later as a Tornado Watch was issued.

"As the storms began to develop, I became aware of their persistence," said Purpura. "I also noted that the storms would make it from southwest Oklahoma into central Oklahoma, and on their present path, come close to Norman, where we lived. We began to put our tornado safety plan in place, and emptied one of our home's interior closets in case we would need to take shelter." Purpura went outside to watch the storm as it approached. "I could not see the tornado itself from home, but could see almost continuous lightning in the mid- and anvil portion of the storm. After a time, I realized that the storm would miss us to the west. I then had the stark realization it was going to hit populated areas of Oklahoma City, about 20 miles away, and in our office's county warning area. "Since I lived 5 minutes from work, I told my wife..."The tornado will miss us, but I really need to see what is happening at work. If you start having contractions, let me know and I'll be right back!" I went in to the office at 7:00 p.m. as the tornado was entering Oklahoma City, and left about midnight for home."

Purpura finished his story by telling his daughter that he was able to sleep a couple of hours and took his wife to the hospital the next morning. Suzanna Rose was born early May 4, 1999, and Jim knows that each year as they celebrate her birthday, he'll remember the day he juggled his duties at the office with one of the biggest days in his life, the birth of his second child.

He continues to balance those personal and professional challenges many meteorologists face during a career. Last October he moved to San Diego to become the meteorologist in charge from his similar duties in Corpus Christi, Texas and arrived in California just in time to face one of the most devastating wildfires in the state's history. This time, he had to put moving into his new home on temporary hold because he and his staff were providing weather forecasts to land management agencies that were battling wildfires that raged near his new hometown.

Balancing the professional and personal life of a meteorologist is never a dull moment, Purpura said.

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: A strong cold front pushed through much of the region last week, and strong winds were experienced in many areas. This week's statement of the week is a high wind watch from WFO Salt Lake City, Tuesday April 27. The watch provided excellent lead time for the event and highlighted the areas most likely to receive strong winds and reduced visibility. Subsequent warnings and advisories also did a good job showing where the strongest winds occurred.

WWUS75 KSLC 271121
NPWSLC

URGENT - WEATHER MESSAGE
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SALT LAKE CITY UT
520 AM MDT TUE APR 27 2004

UTZ002>005-015-016-272300-
GREAT SALT LAKE DESERT AND MOUNTAINS-NORTHERN WASATCH FRONT-SALT LAKE AND TOOELE VALLEYS-SOUTHERN WASATCH FRONT-SOUTHWEST UTAH-WEST CENTRAL UTAH-
520 AM MDT TUE APR 27 2004

...HIGH WIND WATCH SERVICE HAS ISSUED A HIGH WIND WATCH FOR WEDNESDAY AND WEDNESDAY EVENING FOR MOST UTAH VALLEYS. THE WATCH COVERS ALL AREAS NEAR AND WEST OF INTERSTATE 15 BETWEEN CEDAR CITY AND THE IDAHO BORDER.

THE COLD FRONT THAT WILL PUSH ACROSS THE AREA WEDNESDAY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY VERY WINDY CONDITIONS OVER THE WESTERN UTAH VALLEYS. WIND SPEEDS IN EXCESS OF 40 MPH WITH GUSTS OVER 60 MPH ARE POSSIBLE...ESPECIALLY OVER THE SALT FLATS IN NORTHWEST UTAH. THE WINDS ARE EXPECTED OVER THE NORTHERN SALT FLATS BY EARLY WEDNESDAY AND WILL SPREAD SOUTH DURING THE DAY...REACHING CEDAR CITY BY LATE AFTERNOON OR EARLY EVENING.

THE STRONG WINDS WILL ALSO CAUSE AREAS OF BLOWING DUST... SPECIALLY IN THE DESERTS AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS. THIS MAY RESULT IN SOME AREAS OF VERY POOR VISIBILITY. THE COMBINATION OF THE WINDS AND EAST-WEST ORIENTED HIGHWAYS LIKE INTERSTATE 80 AND HIGHWAY 50 AND 6 WEST OF DELTA.

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SONS exercise participants at the Los Angeles Incident Command Post

Southern California WFOs Support Major Oil Spill Exercise: WFOs San Diego and Los Angles/Oxnard provided direct support to a major oil spill exercise along the southern California coast in April. The 2004 Spill of National Significance (SONS) exercise, conducted April 19-23, tested the ability of federal, state, and local agencies to respond to a major oil spill. Tim McClung, Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) from WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard, and Mike Lavis, an Incident Meteorologist (IMET) from WFO San Diego, provided dedicated on-site support at Incident Command Posts in Los Angles and San Diego (respectively) throughout the exercise.

One of the simulations involved a release of 1,000,000 gallons of crude oil from a leaking tanker in the Los Angeles Harbor over a period of 16 hours. The other scenario involved a release of 10,000 barrels of oil from a barge off the coast near San Diego. Both simulated events occurred between 4 a.m. and 12 noon (local time) on April 20.

Mike Lavis (WFO San Diego) briefs exercise participants on equipment used by IMETs outside the San Diego Incident Command Post.

Weather played a very critical role in the SONS exercise. Although the weather in April in southern California is typically tranquil, the weather information used for this exercise was definitely not. Exercise planners decided early on to use a simulated weather scenario (canned weather) to ensure that weather would significantly challenge exercise participants with regard to their planning and decision-making. Simulated westerly winds near 25 knots in the offshore channel frustrated participants by not allowing recovery vessels to contain the spill in its early stages. Instead, the strong (simulated) winds pushed the oil onshore. This was followed by a wind shift the next day, when offshore winds pushed the oil back. After a lull in the winds Wednesday night and Thursday, winds were forecast to increase to gale force by late Friday to further complicate planning.

Mike Lavis and Tim McClung provided frequent planning and operations briefings to exercise participants, both on a regularly scheduled and as-needed basis. Besides NWS, major participants included NOAA Hazmat, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, Conoco-Phillips, and a multitude of other federal, state, and local agencies. Additionally, representatives from the Mexican government were present to help deal with portions of the spill which spread to the northern Baja California coastline.

The SONS exercise was very successful. As the largest multi-agency exercise of its kind ever conducted, it was tremendous opportunity for NWS participants to build and strengthen relationships with other agencies and partners and to focus attention on the critical role of weather in major hazardous materials spill response and clean-up efforts.

WFOs Seattle and Portland Participate in Mariners Conference in Seattle: The WCMs from WFO Seattle and WFO Portland provided a briefing at the Council of American Master Mariners in Seattle, WA on April 29. Approximately 50 persons attended. The briefing highlighted the Voluntary Observing Ships (VOS) program, marine weather products and services from coastal WFOs, offshore and high seas products and services from the Ocean Prediction Center (OPC), the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD), and a summary of Pacific marine weather hazards.


Brooke Walsh (CMDL) performs maintenance on equipment used to measure atmospheric ozone.

WFO Hanford Providing Dobson Ozone Observations: WFO Hanford is one of only a few National Weather Service offices in the United States (and the only in Western Region) providing routine atmospheric ozone measurements to NOAA's Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory (CMDL), located in Boulder, Colorado. CMDL maintains a total of seven Dobson Ozone Spectrophotometers throughout the United States (including four at NWS locations), with several more observation sites on four other continents.

WFO Hanford performs three ozone observations per day (year-round). Meteorologist Intern Mike Sowko is WFO Hanford's focal point for this program, but all of Hanford's

operational and management staff is proficient in taking observations. The observation data is sent to CMDL daily, where it is quality-controlled and officially published and available for climate research by agencies around the world.

WFO Medford forecaster Rick Holtz monitors satellite data on the new large monitor

WFO Medford Installs Large Video Briefing Display: WFO Medford installed a new large LCD (flat panel) video monitor in its operations area during April. The new screen will also allow forecasters to more prominently display weather satellite and radar information (and other weather data), and to enhance weather briefings. The data is ported to the screen via a connection through the Weather Event Simulator computer. The screen is mounted on the wall with a special arm which allows the screen to be extended two feet from the wall.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

Teletraining for FFMP: Western Region Hydrology and Climate Services Division (HCSD) developed teletraining for FFMP (Flash Flood Monitoring and Prediction). Three training sessions have already been conducted and two more sessions are currently scheduled. This training is directed towards anybody who will be using FFMP operationally, but is useful for anyone who wants to know more about FFMP. The training is an interactive visitview teletraining session and lasts about 90 minutes. If you are interested in the training, please contact Melissa Smith with HCSD at (801) 524-5137.

Here are the remaining two training dates and times:

Friday May 7, 2004	9 AM MDT/8 AM PDT
Monday May 10, 2004	2 PM MDT/1 PM PDT

Climate Services Program: On April 27, 2004, the RFC and WFO Climate Steering Committees met with the development group of PRISM in Corvallis, Oregon. The purpose of the meeting was to look at possible ways in which PRISM datasets can be used in WFO operations and how the RFCs can benefit from improved PRISM products (since the RFCs already use PRISM in their operations). Both committees will discuss what they learned at the meeting, and the potential for using PRISM data in the gridded forecast program. We plan to provide the other WR offices with a summary of our ideas for PRISM data use in the region. In the meantime, if you are interested in learning more about PRISM, or what products are currently available, please visit their website at: http://www.ocs.oregonstate.edu/prism/**.**

Deputy Secretary of Commerce Visits Sacramento Offices: Deputy Secretary of Commerce Ted Kassinger visited the California-Nevada RFC and WFO Sacramento on Tuesday, May 4. He also toured the Federal-State Flood Center and was briefed on the many hydrologic forecasts and activities which the NWS does in cooperation with state and federal partners in California. He was introduced to the process of creating grids and deriving forecasts from them. One item which sparked his interest was the "Performance Measures" bulletin board. He was very interested in how goals were set and results used at local offices.

SCIETIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

University Assignment Program (UAP): The National Weather Service (NWS) University Assignment Program (UAP) offers opportunities for both full-time and part-time training assignments in job- or career-related studies at an accredited educational facility. It enables full-time employees to keep abreast of advances in science and technology, and other innovations within their occupational fields. The program also provides an opportunity for employees to learn new skills, as well as to develop and improve abilities they require in current or future positions. The UAP should be used only when the needed skills or knowledge requires a comprehensive long-term study program rather than a series of unconnected, short-term courses.

An email, with the attached UAP proposal instructions, was sent to each office last week. Nominations must be forwarded through and approved by local management. **Proposals must be submitted to SSD by May 21.**

COMET Convective Weather Season Training: During the last year, the COMET Program has published several new materials that can help prepare for the convective weather season:

- Principles of Convection II: Using Hodographs: Provides a basic understanding of how to plot and interpret hodographs, with application to convective environments.

- Principles of Convection III: Shear and Convective Storms: Discusses the role of wind shear in the structure and evolution of convective storms.

- An MCS Matrix and A Convective Storm Matrix: Buoyancy/Shear Dependencies (Web Versions): Provides a tool to build a strategy for anticipating convective system structures, their evolutions, and potential for severe weather.

- Two of the sections in "10 Common Misconceptions" ("Convective Precipitation is Directly Parameterized" and "A Good Synoptic Forecast Implies a Good Convective Forecast")

- Convective Weather Refresher: PowerPoint presentation explaining various convective parameterization schemes used in NCEP's operational models, along with some convective guidance products. Includes speaker's notes.

- Australian Warm Season Severe Thunderstorm Case Studies: Follows a forecast time-line to assess data and make decisions from the pre-storm phase through the warning phase.

Additional convective weather training is available on our MetEd Website at: http://www.meted.ucar.edu/topics_convective.php.

The Virtual Institute for Satellite Integration Training (VISIT)and the Integrated Sensor Training ProfessionalDevelopment Series (ISTPDS) sessions for May:

The teletraining planning calendar for May is:

- Mesoscale Convective Vortices
  (Basic, May 5,13,21,26)
- **Updated - Water Vapor Channel Satellite Imagery
  (Basic, May 17,24)
- Applying the Ten Principles of Climate Monitoring in NWS Field Operations
  (Basic, May 6,18)
- The Enhanced-V: A Satellite Severe Storm Signature
  (Basic, May 21,28)
- Lightning Meteorology I
  (Basic, May 3)
- Lightning Meteorology II
  (Advanced, May 4)
- Use of GOES/RSO imagery with other Remote Sensor Data for Diagnosing Severe Weather across CONUS (RSO 3)
  Part 1 (Intermediate, May 6,11)
  Part 2 (May 7,12)

Offices can register for the teletraining sessions by emailing: visit@comet.ucar.edu. The teletraining calendar is at: http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/visit/ecal.asp.

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

Hanford Program Review: The Hanford Program review was conducted last week. On that trip Son, Mike Brittain, and Duane Bietz replaced the slip ring assembly on the Radar. The program review was conducted by Joe Lachacz, Sean Wink, Son Nguyen, and Bob Diaz.

RMS Training: George Montenegro is attending the RRS maintenance class in Kansas City this week. George will then spend one week in Sterling Virginia to assist in developing the technical manual for this system.

NOAA IT Security Conference: NOAA is hosting an IT security conference in Silver Spring, MD, this week. The agenda includes presentations, panel discussions, and breakout sessions addressing a variety of IT security issues, practices, and tools. SOD will be represented at the conference.

Telecommunications: The Remote Access Server has been upgraded to a new ISDN PRI circuit, replacing the current channalized T-1 circuit. The new ISDN circuit increases the simultaneous dial-in capability to 23 and saves Western Region $1100.00 a month. The local number will change from (801) 524-5200 to (801) 924-1035. The Toll Free number, 877-302-3937 will not change. We are currently waiting on MCI to process the change order for the new local number. Once the change order has been processed, the new ISDN circuit will become active. This change will be transparent to the users, except for those using the local number. Notification via E-mail will be sent when the change is completed.